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NUMISMATIC SERIES

No. 2

A New Coin of King Sadavahana from Kondapur

BY

DR. M. RAMA RAO, M.A., Ph.D.
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HYDERABAD-DECCAN

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A NEW COIN OF KING SADAVAHANA FROM KONDAPUR

MR. KHWAJA MUHAMMAD AHMAD, the Director of Archæology, has placed the scholarly world under a deep debt of gratitude through his startling discoveries at Kondapur. Near this simple and unostentatious village in the Medak district he had hit upon a site which once contained a great and flourishing city. Preliminary excavations on the site have brought to light, very near the surface level, interesting antiquities like terra-cottas, pottery, beads and ancient coins and implements. His work has resulted in the exposure of an industrial area, civilian quarters and many Buddhist establishments. This site resembles in its extent and richness of antiquities that of Takshasila in north-western India. Kondapur rightly deserves the title the 'Taxila of the south.' Kondapur in the Medak district and Nagarjunakonda in the Guntur district (the Sarnath of the south), both recently discovered, afford good peep-holes into the brilliant epoch of the Andhras in Dekkan history and culture.

Of all the antiquities discovered at Kondapur, coins are the most important and interesting. Some of these are punch-marked coins easily assignable to the fifth and sixth centuries B.C. The bulk of these coins belong to the celebrated Satavahana dynasty of the Dekkan. They reveal many new types and designs and cover many reigns in the later history of this dynasty. Two groups of rectangular pieces, both containing the figure of the elephant standing with trunk hanging below and the name of king Gautamiputra Satakarni are of particular importance. There is a persistent opinion among scholars that this king did not issue any coins of his own while one group of writers hold that this monarch did not rule over the Telugu speaking

parts of the Dekkan. The find of his coins at Kondapur in Telingana shows conclusively that both these views are wrong. Since that king is not known to have conquered this region it follows that he inherited it from his ancestors. It may be reasonably inferred therefore that the Telugu area was under Satavahana rule for some time before the epoch of this monarch.

The most remarkable of all the discoveries made at Kondapur is that of a pendant-shaped coin (Plate II) mentioning a king named Sadavahana, hitherto unknown. It contains on the obverse the figure of an elephant with its trunk hanging, facing the proper left and a legend in Brahmi characters mentioning the name of king Sadavahana, who issued it. On the reverse side there is the Ujjain Symbol surmounted by a crescent and formed of a thick cross, thick circles and thick pellets. There is a pellet between each pair of circles on the outside. The characters of the legend resemble very closely those of the earliest known inscriptions of the Satavahana family and may be assigned to the third quarter of the third century B.C. Since the first king of the family, hitherto known, has the title Satavahana and since his successor mentions Satavahana as the name of his family it may be concluded that this king Satavahana was the founder and first member of the celebrated Satavahana dynasty. I assign him to 235-220 B.C.

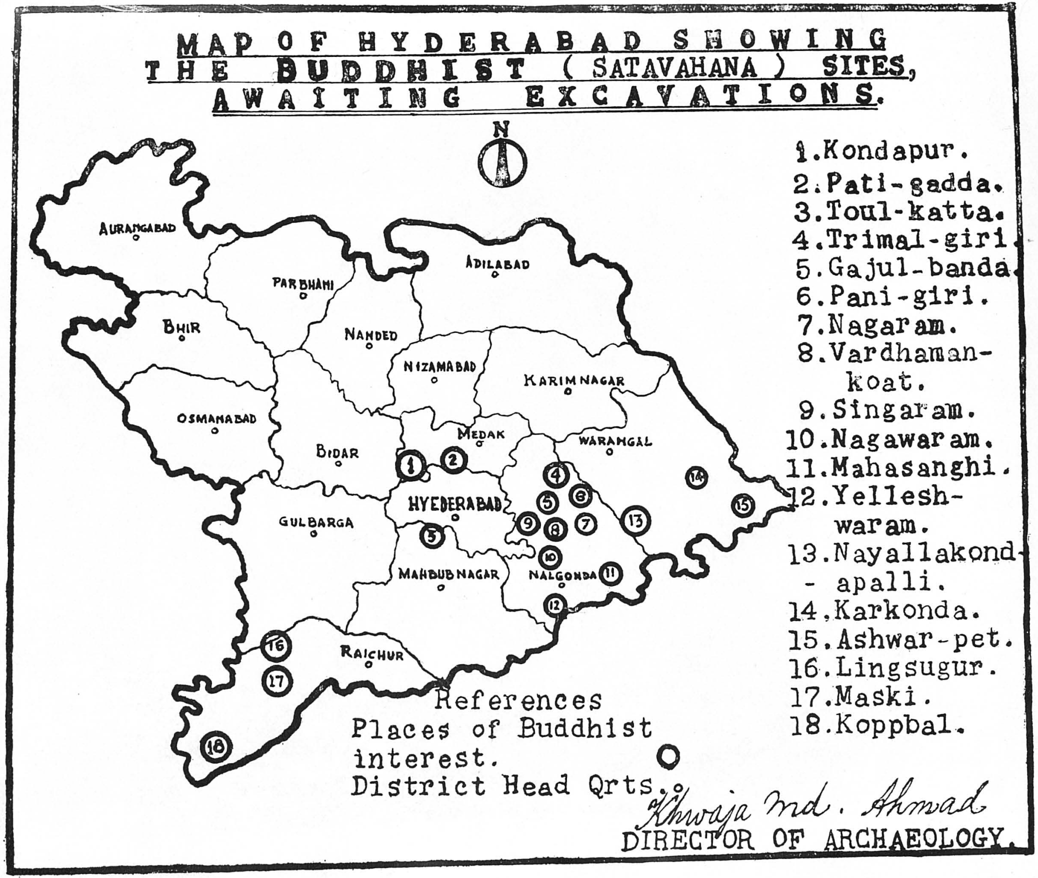
This coin from Kondapur also solves, once and for all, the vexing controversy about the original home of this ruling family. Mr. Khwaja Muhammad Ahmad has found several Satavahana sites in Nalgonda, Mahbubnagar, Raichur, Medak and Bidar districts (Plate I) and the few antiquities obtained from many of these sites indicate their remote antiquity. It may be presumed that all these districts of Telingana formed part of the kingdom of Satavahana. Sites of the Satavahana period have also been found in the coastal districts of Vizag, Godavari, Krishna and Guntur on the

other side of the Eastern Ghats. Megasthenes, a Greek writer of the fourth century B.C., locates the Andhra people contiguous to the Kalingas and states that they had thirty walled towns. This description suits the Telugu districts on either side of the Ghats admirably. The Satavahana were a clan of the Andhra people. The discovery of the coin of the founder of this family as well as his identity at Kondapur, situated within this ancient Andhra homeland, shows that this king rose to power in his own home territory.

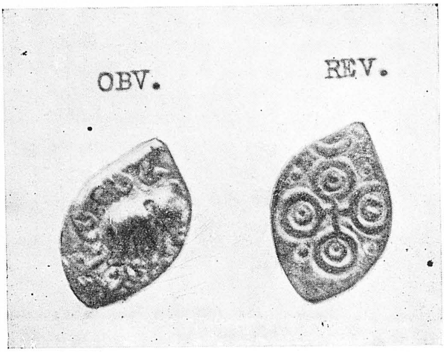
I am sure that further excavations will bring to light a richer harvest of antiquities throwing further light upon the history of this ancient city near Kondapur and the brilliant epoch of the Andhra people in the ancient history of the Dekkan.

Editor's Note.

Two coins of king Satavahana (Sadavahana) have been published earlier, one in the Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute, Poona. This coin was purchased from a dealer of Aurangabad. The other coin was published by Mahamahopadhyaya V. V. Mirashi, in the Journal of the Numismatic Society of India, Vol. VII, 1945. This coin was purchased from a dealer of Warangal. Thus it may be presumed that the provenance of both these coins must also be somewhere in the middle of Hyderabad State, *i.e.*, at or near Kondapur. The Hyderabad Museum coin which has been discussed in this brochure by Dr. M. Rama Rao, is being published in the Journal of the Numismatic Society of India also by Mahamahopadhyaya Mirashi.



Map of Hyderabad State showing Kondapur and other Satavahana Sites



Coin of King Sadavahana in Hyderabad Museum